8 April 2020

Excellency,

The world is confronted with the worst crisis since the Second World War, a crisis with unprecedented political, economic, social and humanitarian consequences. The coronavirus pandemic has affected more than 1,400.000 people and is still spreading, causing immense human suffering. Over 80.000 have lost their lives and short-term projections are tragic.

Four billion people are in lockdown, the outlook for the global economy is worsening by the day, causing massive unemployment and disruptions at all levels. Health systems in many countries are under severe stress.

Apart from the devastating human consequences of the Covid-19 epidemic, the economic uncertainty it sparked, will cost the global economy USD$1 trillion in 2020, according to the latest estimates of UNCTAD. ILO estimates that 1,25 billion people will be either jobless or will see a reduction of their income. FAO is alerting to the need to ensure food supply chain and production and warns of the threat to food security worldwide.

The devastating result is shrinking economies, loss of job opportunities; rising inequalities; and a surge in poverty with a dangerous impact on efforts to fight climate change and ensure a sustainable path for development. Decades of efforts to reach and implement important international agreements are under threat of being lost – the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Climate Agreement are at risk.

His Excellency
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His Excellency
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His Excellency
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The combination of economic and social stresses brought on by the pandemic, as well as restrictions on movement, have dramatically increased the numbers of women and, girls and boys facing abuse, in almost all countries. Many women under lockdown for Covid-19 face violence where they should be safest - in their own homes.

The worst affected will be the developing countries and the most vulnerable among them, who do not have solid health systems and economic or financial capacity to respond to a crisis of such proportion. For those, it is crisis within a crisis. They need special assistance and support.

The virus is tragically affecting millions of refugees, displaced persons, and people in conflict-affected areas. Health systems in war-ravaged and postconflict countries have reached the point of total collapse.

The world is entering an extremely dangerous period with severe consequences for peace and security. The virus does not know geographical or political borders, political systems of ethnic and religious divides.
It indiscriminately hits everywhere and everyone.

This is the greatest peacetime challenge that the United Nations and humanity as a whole has ever faced.

The threat is global and needs a global response. In humanity's recent history, there has never been a moment when global action and coordination are vital for lives of people and for peace.

The role of the United Nations leadership in this global response is paramount. In the year of its 75th anniversary, the UN should demonstrate unequivocally that multilateralism is relevant and that it works. The UN Charter defines the role of the UN Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security. It is the time now that it rises to its responsibility and declares loud and clear that this pandemic is a threat to international peace and security.

UNSC has recognized health threats in the past. It adopted Resolution 1308 on HIV/AIDS and peacekeepers. It took, for the first time, a bold decision by adopting a historic Resolution 2177 that declared the spread of the Ebola virus a "threat to international peace and security" and called for resources and action.

It was a major decision unanimously supported by the 15 UNSC Members on a draft resolution submitted by 130 sponsors, more than any previous one in the history of the United Nations.

Clearly the coronavirus pandemic is going far wider, killing far more people than 2014-2015 West Africa Ebola did, and it requires urgent action by the UNSC. An unprecedented situation requires unprecedented steps to save lives and to safeguard peace and security.

What is now required is leadership and deep commitment to the Charter of the United Nations. If the Security Council members are unable to initiate the adoption of such a resolution, the only other recourse is Article 99 of the UN Charter:

"The Secretary General may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security."

In this way, all 15 Members of the UNSC will stand in front of their collective and individual responsibilities. The UN Secretary General has already declared that "The UN must fully assume its responsibilities first, by doing what we have to do our peacekeeping operations, our humanitarian agencies, our support to the different bodies of the international community, the Security Council, the General Assembly".

The UNSG made another important statements, calling for a cease fire, urging warring parties across the world to lay down their weapons in support of the biggest battle against Covid-19 – the common enemy that is now threating humankind and, this morning, against the rise of domestic violence by asking for peace in the homes.

There are a number of important decisions and appeals launched recently. The UNGA adopted unanimously a Resolution titled Global Solidarity to Fight COVID-19, calling for increased global solidarity and international cooperation.

G-20 leaders invited to consider bold and urgent measures to give to the global economic problem a global response in order to prevent that a global recession becomes a global depression.

These decisions need to be bolstered by the voice of the UN Security Council that should act decisively now. It is now time to act.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Signed electronically by Members of the Group of Women Leades, Voices for Change and Inclusion

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